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S P E E C H

HON. CHARLES J. BIDDLE,

OF PENNSYLVANIA.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JUNE 2, 1862.

The House having under consideration Senate bill No. 184, to authorize the President of the United States to appoint diplomatic representatives to the republics of Hayti and Liberia, respectively, and the following substitute having been proposed by Mr. Cox:

"That there be appointed for each of the republics of Liberia and Hayti a consul general, who shall be authorized to negotiate any treaties of commerce between said republics and this country. And the salaries of said consuls general shall be the same as those now fixed by law"—

Mr. BIDDLE said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to submit a few remarks in advocacy of the amendment of the gentleman from Ohio, (Mr. Cox.) Coming from him—a distinguished member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs—it shows that the committee is not unanimous in recommending the bill as it stands. The bill thus amended would meet, I hope, the views of many constituents and valued friends of mine who have at heart the substantial interests of the colony of Liberia. It can enjoy, under the provisions of this amendment, the fullest commercial privileges. It will not have the honorary distinction of diplomatic representation, the necessity for which has been, I think, over-estimated.

By the published tables, I do not find that the commerce with Liberia and Hayti suffers under any depression that might not be expected in times like these. Consular representation has sufficed there, as it has in a great many other countries. A consul or a naval officer may be empowered to make a treaty, if one is needed. All this the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Cox) has fully shown.

It is true that the consul now at Hayti—an intelligent gentleman from Massachusetts—is very urgent on this subject; but in the letter from him, alluded to by the gentleman who first addressed the House, (Mr. GOOCH,) I find stated what is, perhaps, not the weakest motive for his urgency to be ranked with the diplomatists. He says.

"Their liberal salaries enable them to assume a style of living and a place in the social world of Hayti entirely beyond my reach."

Sir, this is the ambition to shine in "the first circles" which is constantly prompting our representatives at foreign courts to ask for higher rank and higher compensation, and, as constantly, this House refuses to gratify that ambition.

Some gentlemen are willing, I know, to grant this diplomatic representation, thinking it a small matter; if it be so, let it wait till the day of small things. This is a time when small things may have great significance.

But, sir, it is the present condition of the African race in this country, and the momentous political questions connected with it, which suggest to my mind

objections to our now entering into new relations with these negro communities.

A short time since, the gentleman from Missouri, (Mr. BLAIR)—whom I have always regarded as the Achilles of the Republican party—told that party some plain truths. No man knows the facts better than he does, and he said :

"Every man acquainted with the facts knows that it is fallacious to call this 'a slaveholders' rebellion.' If such was the fact, two divisions of our Army could have suppressed it without difficulty; the negroes themselves could easily put down the two hundred and fifty thousand slaveholders;" * * * "a closer scrutiny demonstrates the contrary to be true; such a scrutiny demonstrates that the rebellion originated chiefly with the non-slaveholders resident in the strongholds of the institution, not springing, however, from any love of slavery, but from an antagonism of race and hostility to the idea of equality with the blacks involved in simple emancipation."

There the gentleman from Missouri touched the true point; there he hit the right nail on the head. The leaders of the rebellion had diverse aims; but it was only on one point that they could unite the people. Who helped them to do so, and how the white population of the South was driven to frenzy on that point, I will not stop now to discuss. A triumphant anti-slavery party; resistance by mobs and State legislatures to the fugitive slave law; the John Brown raid, and the public rejoicings over it; the fanatic crusade in which pulpit, press, and forum joined; the programme of the Helper book and the Chicago platform endorsed by leading politicians of the North—these should have been weighed more calmly at the South. Secession and war could afford no remedy for any of them. It was no case for an appeal to the sword; the appeal lay to the intelligence and sober second thought of the American people.

And, now, sir, in the midst of a great civil war, in which every incident is seized upon to heighten and exasperate the angriest passions, even the recognition of these small colonies gathers importance from its relation to the subject of this strife.

The bill before us is not an isolated measure; it is a part of a policy that has greatly contributed to the severance of the Union; it is part of a policy, the prevalence of which in the councils of the nation is at this moment the greatest obstacle to the restoration of the Union, and the successful prosecution of the war.

The futile question of slavery in the territories acquired from Mexico threatened the Union in 1850; but the great intellects of the generation that guided then the destinies of our country—a generation of which a few still tower among us—showed to the intelligence of the American people that they were about "to find cause of quarrel in a straw." Webster, and Clay, and Cass, and their compeers tossed aside the "Wilmot proviso," and like firebrands, and, without proscribing slavery, left it to make its dreaded inroads upon Utah and New Mexico.

What followed? Let the census answer. In twelve years, in Territories left open to it, slavery established itself to this formidable extent: New Mexico, twenty-four slaves; Utah, twenty-nine. In Kansas there were many pro-slavery politicians, many anti slavery politicians, but, I believe, no slaves at all.

And now, sir—to come at once to the present time—it has just been announced to the American people, divided and impoverished by a mad strife about this slavery question, that the Chicago platform is at last fulfilled—the Territories of the United States are free! Yes, we have achieved freedom for the twenty-nine slaves in Utah, and for the twenty-four slaves in New Mexico, and for the cooks and chambermaids in this District; but at an awful cost, an awful cost to the cause of constitutional liberty throughout the world—perhaps throughout all time!

Why, it was such a futile question, this question of slavery in the Territo-

ries, that you might have left it to the first five or six men whom you could get to act as arbitrators. William Penn, the illustrious founder of Pennsylvania, once proposed to the States of Europe, to sheathe the sword forever, and settle all their differences by arbitration. The great men who framed a Constitution for the States of America realized that noble thought of Penn. They established a great national tribunal, and gave to its decisions the sanctity of law; thus they thought to avoid forever the antiquated, barbarous, and uncertain arbitrament of the sword. Before the judges of this tribunal came this futile question—futile as masonry or anti-masonry—the question of slavery in the Territories. They could decide it; not so as to please everybody; no private cause is ever so decided as to please both plaintiff and defendant; but what society asks of its tribunals is to put an end to strife—*ut sit finis litium*. The Supreme Court pronounced against the proscription of an institution once common to all the States, and which fifteen of them still maintained. Some thought the judgment right, some thought it wrong; but it seems to me that the maddest zealot will admit, now, that any peaceful arbitration was better than the carnage and devastation of a civil war.

But, sir, politicians rebelled against that decision; they formed a political party to resist it, as they resisted the fugitive slave law; they filled the minds of the southern people with the fear that the Constitution would prove no shield for the rights of the minority; and now the hopes of the wise and good are baffled, and the blind and bloody arbiter, the sword, is settling for these States disputed points of constitutional law. Yes, this futile abstract point of law about slavery in the Territories was that on which politicians shouted “No compromise!” “No arbitration!” “No Supreme Court!” forgetting, or perhaps not knowing the deep truth uttered by the great thinker Edmund Burke:—

“All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act is founded on compromise.”

The apprehension that the party about to assume power would so use it as to disturb the relation between the races was, as the gentleman from Missouri has truly said, the cause of this rebellion. Through it the rebel leaders roused the people and raised their armies. Now, my notion of policy has always been not to accredit those leaders by doing all they said we would do, but by our action, to discredit them, and disabuse the minds of the people. I would have the war prosecuted for attainable ends; you may crimson a thousand battle-fields and never “wash the blackamoor white.”

To preserve the old frame of government, to rally to it the old affections, to divide the enemy, and to offer always terms that make submission better than resistance—this has seemed to me true policy, civil and military, such as the old masters practiced. An eminent writer on military science, Jomini, speaking of war against a united people, says:

“If success be possible in such a war, the following course will be most likely to insure it, namely: make a display of force proportioned to the obstacles and resistance likely to be encountered, calm the popular passions in every possible way, exhaust them by time and patience, display courtesy, gentleness, and severity united, and particularly deal justly. The example of Henry IV in the wars of the League,” * * * * *
“of Hoche in La Vendée, are models of their kind, which may be employed, according to circumstances, with equal success.”

Sir, if to this time the people of the border States had offered to the masses of the South a spectacle of entire contentment and security upon this negro question, I believe the credit of the southern leaders would have been so shaken that they could not have kept an army in the field.

I know that there are gentlemen who have deemed all policy on this subject little better than timidity; who say here constantly that they do not care how much they irritate rebels; but the result has not been happy. The gentleman

from Missouri nearest to me [Mr. PHELPS] told us that Fremont's proclamation raised an army for the rebels in that State; and other proclamations have been issued, and bills passed here, that might have been drafted by Jeff. Davis himself, they snit his purposes so well.

Such, it seems to me, has been the tendency and the character of our African policy, of which this bill is a part. It has doubled the work for our armies.

Sir, the crisis seems to me too great, the proportions of this rebellion are yet too vast, for us to treat it flippantly. To achieve success that shall be lasting and substantial, it is not enough to defeat southern armies. Till the masses of the southern people yield a cheerful allegiance to this Government, we shall never again have the Union in which there is strength. We may have a vast standing army, but if it be fully occupied at home, it can inspire no dread abroad. Till we again have a cordial Union of these once United States, we are like "the house divided against itself;" in the eyes of Europe we will be the "sick man" of the western hemisphere.

Nor do I see any gleam of hope for returning prosperity to my country in the unnatural schemes for turning the fertile regions of the South into a howling wilderness of revolted negroes. As an American citizen, nay, even as the representative of a mercantile community, I may utter my protest against that. You must treble, too, your present army to accomplish it.

The restoration of the Federal authority was the reasonable and legitimate aim that enlisted the northern and the border States in the prosecution of this war. Wars of vengeance and ambition had fallen under the ban of religion and humanity; and to all war so many evils are incident that a modern statesman, echoing the sentiment of Cicero, declared that the worst peace was better than the best war. I have, however, so far departed from the principles of my Quaker-forefathers as to recognize the necessity of war. Even the jealousy of foreign Powers did not prevent them from recognizing in this war a legitimate effort to restore authority thrown off with precipitate and insulting violence. But, sir, when, in the language of the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. THOMAS,] you turn this war into a "remorseless struggle over the dead body of the Constitution," you will make it repugnant to the sentiments and to the interests of the civilized world.

I cannot see that the policy of which this bill is a part, is statesmanlike and judicious at this time. The African policy of the majority of this Congress is spreading far and wide a just alarm for the future of our country and our race. Prompted by that alarm we have seen men, bound together by no party ties, assemble in this Hall when the tedious duties of the day were over, on a call "to defeat the schemes of the abolitionists and the secessionists." Thus were justly coupled the authors of the ills that now afflict our country, and I believe that throughout the land thoughtful, conservative, Union-loving men everywhere do so couple them.

When ANDREW JOHNSON, fresh from his seat in this Congress, lately addressed the people at Nashville, he told them: "SUMNER wants to break up the Government, and so do the abolitionists generally." Sir, it is in this day of double danger to the Constitution that we are called upon to weigh well the acts of legislation that may afford countenance to either class of its enemies. When I see with whom this Senate bill originated I cannot disregard the warning of ANDREW JOHNSON. I cannot recognize this measure as now prompted by that genuine philanthropy of which political abolitionism is the basest of counterfeits.

I know, sir, well, that the constant effort of the abolitionist is to foster the belief that only those whose interests are involved in slavery oppose the abolition policy. Representing a free State, I may well say of slavery:

"What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba,
That I should weep for her?"

Sir, when the Representatives of the slave States exercised a large influence in this Government, I never received nor asked their favors. Now, surely it would not be a propitious time for a man to range himself on the side of slavery.

But, sir, though no interests on earth are more remote from me and mine than the interests of slavery, yet I share to the full the apprehension, the alarm that has been expressed by the Representatives from the border States upon this floor. Sir, that alarm would spread to every man of my constituents who loves his country and his race, if the public mind were not lulled and put to sleep with the word "colonization." I say the *word*, not the thing; for no practicable and adequate scheme for it has ever been presented or devised. The word is sung to us as a sort of "lullaby." I am fully conscious of the value, in this respect, of the Liberian colony. But I will not be misled by it. It gives us the means of measuring the adequacy of colonization to meet general, precipitate emancipation. Sir, it is illusory; it does not tranquilize me. When I see men bent on breaking down the dikes and opening the floodgates that shut out an inundation, I am not tranquillized, because some philanthropist stands by with a pint mug, promising to bail it out again. Colonization may carry off the leakage and the running over; but if you suddenly let in the floods, it will prove but a "pint mug" measure of relief. It is vain to suppose that the industrial interests of the North can be made to bear a frightful expenditure to buy up and send away the productive labor of the South. That is political economy run mad. Indeed, when the proposition came before us, one of my colleagues, an eminent supporter of the Administration, the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, [Mr. STEVENS,] said, with his usual frankness, that it made no difference whether we adopted or rejected it; he said it was "about the most diluted milk-and-water gruel proposition that was ever given to the American people." Another distinguished colleague of mine, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, [Mr. HICKMAN,] who voted for Mr. Lincoln, I believe, called him "a coward" for making such a proposition. While eminent members of the party in power thus laugh to scorn this colonization scheme, I may well say it remains but an empty word. Yet, all measures for freeing slaves are pushed with the utmost activity.

Take your post on the avenue towards nightfall; you shall see troops of fugitives pouring into this city. Lately an appeal to us to provide for them was laid on the desk of every member. Where do they go to? To South America? That is one of the *words* in fashion now. No, sir. There are no ways, no means, as the chairman of that committee said, for sending them to South America, and we own no place there to send them to. If you really meant to colonize the negroes, you should not set them free till you were ready to colonize them.

But the fact is that the abolitionists always have been, and now are, notoriously the bitterest opponents of colonization. Just now the *word* suits them, but they abhor the thing. It is no part of their plan to send the negro race away. They want it here. They want it armed. They want it clothed with political rights. They want it to support their power, now on the wane among white men.

Do they not constantly tell us here that instant emancipation is best, because the negroes then will hold possession of the southern States? But this leaves wholly out of account the white race. If not exterminated, it will resume its sway as soon as we withdraw our armies, and, as every State assumes the right to fix the status of the negro race within its borders, slavery may be re-established. To this they answer, we will keep a force there to maintain the freedom of the blacks. I want no more than this to show that endless intervention

in the States, for the sake of the blacks against the whites, is a necessary consequence of the abolition policy.

The fear that their power is passing away seems to stimulate the promoters of this policy to consummate it irremediably by the most precipitate and desperate measures. There has been a persistent effort to nullify all laws, State and Federal, for the reclamation of fugitives. First you forbid the military authority to restrain slaves, then the military is made to exclude the civil jurisdiction of the subject. Thus, wherever our forces move, involuntary servitude is at an end, whether it be in a hostile or a loyal district. To carry their points by military power outside of the Constitution is the plain, indeed, the avowed intention of the abolitionists. At whose instance has a general officer lately disseminated far and wide his edict abolishing the institution of slavery in three States? I have here one of the handbills, transmitted from the spot, to one of my constituents, by a disgusted officer. Here we are told that "slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible." Rarely have words so incompatible met in the same sentence. Where martial law prevails, there, for the time at least, it is no longer a free country. Not slavery, but freedom and its pillars—free speech, free press, and *habeas corpus*—are incompatible with military rule. Therefore it is that everywhere a just susceptibility has been aroused by the pretension that in States remote from the theatre of war, in States where every civil tribunal is in the full and undisturbed exercise of all its functions—in Pennsylvania, in New Jersey, in New York, in Connecticut—arbitrary arrests, arbitrary imprisonments, arbitrary suppressions, may be justified by an appeal to martial law.

Sir, when this last pretension for military power first met the public eye, and men doubted its authenticity, the abolition press knew it was genuine and burst out in preconceived exultation. The "higher law" was to be realized, and Hayti was to be brought to every man's door. What followed, sir, when the President proclaimed his disavowal? The abolition press scoffed at it; and set up at once the doctrine that the President had no power to affect "rights that had accrued" under General Hunter's order. I find this doctrine maintained daily in the party organ in this city, called The National Republican. And, sir, the vote taken last week upon the wild and unconstitutional emancipation scheme proved, that in any constitutional or conservative policy which the President may adhere to, his support must come from the Democrats and the border State men, and a very few Republicans who enjoy lucid intervals upon the negro question. The vote stood—ayes 74, noes 78; but to that vote against the bill the party which elected Mr. Lincoln did not contribute a corporal's guard; less, I think, than a dozen; nearly all eminent lawyers, who could not compromise their reputations by voting for what was so flagrantly unconstitutional.—And this vote is to be "reconsidered."

Sir, the imposing strength of a party in this Congress bent on making new Haytis, affords to me, at least, sufficient reason for not now recognizing the old one. For if, sir, General Hunter's proclamation was regarded with alarm when it was thought that it had the sanction of the President, can we regard it with less alarm when we find it promulgated in contempt of his authority, at the bidding of a faction that stops at nothing to attain its aims and bolster up its power. How great that power yet is, this House does not need to be told; it is felt here, it is felt everywhere; the ambitious and the venal court it, and the timid fear it. There was a time when the abolition party was alike harmless and insignificant, and, while it remained so, secession was the esoteric doctrine of a small clique in Charleston. These parties spread and grew together till, now, they confront each other, in vast proportions, like Death and Satan at the gates of Hell, as Milton pictures them.

As secession has deluded the South, so abolition has deluded the North. Its

venal press has played its batteries of calumny and clamor against every man who has dared to oppose it. Whenever, in military or civil life, a man has treated this negro question as one that was too great to be made the shuttlecock between the enthusiast and the demagogue; whenever any public man has ventured to cry, "Hold, this slavery is one of the great interests of our country, let us deal with it as sane men deal with the great interests of their country," what a howl this faction raised against him. How it has howled against the Democracy, because, yielding to the instinct of race, their first solicitude has been for the liberties of white men. It strangled the old Whig party, and hounded Choate and Webster to their graves. Yes, it slew the prophets. And now you hear its mutterings rising against Abraham Lincoln, whenever the sobering influence of his great office seems to weigh upon him.

It was within the scope of the President's authority to recognize these countries without an act of Congress, but he has thought proper to refer the matter to our deliberation. Thus he has recognized the fact that this is no unimportant measure. Sir, for that and every other instance of moderation, I pay to him my humble tribute of respect; and, sir, I can truly say that I desire to take no captious exceptions to his policy.

But, sir, the African policy that I am now commenting on is, in my judgment, utterly erroneous, and it shall not have the support of my vote in any stage of it. While we, as representatives, may claim no superiority of judgment over thousands of our constituents, yet, sir, we are the sentinels on the ramparts, and it is our function to give the alarm. Sir, the repugnance to negro equality is as strong in the middle States as it is at the South. It finds expression in our legislation as well as in our social habits. I object to the establishment, at this time, of diplomatic relations with Hayti and Liberia, because it will be taken, and, by those who are at this time its prime movers, it is intended as an acknowledgment of the equality of the races. That may be a philosophic idea, an English idea, but it is eminently un-American. That we are to have a negro here as a minister was frankly admitted by the gentleman from Maine. He did not evade it by saying that white men would be sent from these African communities.

MR. FESSENDEN. That remark was made by the gentleman from Massachusetts, [MR. GOOCH.] My remark simply was, that the gentleman from Ohio might draw his own inference.

MR. GOOCH. I did say, Mr. Speaker, that the bill proposed that we should place Hayti and Liberia on an equality with other nations. I now ask the gentlemen to tell me if he knows of any other rule by which diplomatic relations can be established? I ask him whether it is not a fixed principle that independent nations are equals? I said nothing about equality of races.

MR. BIDDLE. My answer to that is, that I do not wish to establish this diplomatic relation at all.

MR. FESSENDEN. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania let me say in this connection, that I concur in the remark made by the gentleman from Massachusetts, though that remark did not fall from me.

MR. COX. When I asked the gentleman from Maine (MR. FESSENDEN) whether he proposed to have black ministers come here from Hayti, the gentleman from Maine said "why not?" Now, what did he mean by that? I ask him whether or not he is willing to receive black ministers from Hayti?

MR. FESSENDEN. Certainly, sir.

MR. COX. Well, that is all. (Laughter.)

MR. BIDDLE. Then I have been interrupted, but not corrected at all.

MR. LOVEJOY. I want to ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania whether he thinks the Chinese equal to the Yankees?

MR. BIDDLE. That is an ethnological question which is not pertinent to



present subject. I will tell the gentleman what I think on some more appropriate occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I have always regarded Liberia with interest; that infant colony, the child of American benevolence, I have looked to as the means of elevating Africa to a place among the nations. But when I see how deeply the Providence of God has rooted the institution of slavery in this land, I see that it can be safely eradicated only by a gradual process, in which neither the civil nor the military power of the Federal Government can intervene with profit. General emancipation can be safely reached only through State action, prompted by conviction and the progress of natural causes.

Meanwhile, States that refuse admittance to the negro race within their borders, or hold it there in political subordination, have no right to affect a pharisaical intolerance towards States which solve "the negro question" by means of domestic slavery. Through much of all the anti-slavery sentiment of the North there runs a vein of insincerity; and if, through the "great exodus" predicted by the gentleman from Ohio, (Mr. BINGHAM,) the negroes in great numbers are transferred to the North, this unfortunate race may find itself there in a position as unenviable as that from which it may escape.

Mr. BINGHAM. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania allow me to suggest to him that I never intimated that the people would make an exodus to the North. I made an intimation that they would make an exodus from the "house of their bondage," if you dealt justly by them. I never made an intimation that they would make an exodus to the North. The history of the Republic shows well that, left to the enjoyment of their freedom, they would not make exoduses to the North.

Mr. BIDDLE. I thought the gentleman was so good a biblical scholar that he would use the word "exodus" in its appropriate sense, and in relation to such an exodus as that of which we read in the Bible.

Mr. BINGHAM. I do not know that the word exodus suggests to the black or to any other race of men that they should make an exodus to the North.

Mr. BIDDLE. That is a philological question, and I have not time to enter upon it at present.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I will not say by my vote that I think this great national crisis is the happy hour at which to accord, for the first time, diplomatic representation to the negro. Many a true friend of Liberia will admit that this is not the time to assert her claims. Such, at least, is my conviction; and my vote therefore will express that conviction. This is no time to give an inch to those who will take an ell. I will not help to stick a new feather in the cap of abolition; that "Gessler's cap" to which it is sought to make the North bow down, in violation of its sentiments and its interests. I will vote for the amendment; if that is lost then I shall vote against the bill.

